

Wednesday, August 31, 2011  
 Nitze, From Hiroshima to Glasnost  
 C-II

[He was the only note-taker; I have his notes!  
 After each meeting of ExComm, he debriefed Zumwalt (!), Rowen, Vogt and JTM.

(missiles photoed on Oct 14, Sunday; Nitze told night of Oct. 15, Monday:  
 p. 216 He **fails to say** in his memoir what he told me: that he felt “we would have to eat” the missiles, couldn’t get rid of them; and that Rusk agreed! [Compare what Khrushchev said to someone, his son?”: “Americans would have to swallow these, as we did the missiles in Turkey”) “Dean and I agreed that we must move with deliberation and fully reconsider our contingency plans in the face of our confirmed suspicions.”

(Nitze had felt sure they were putting in “offensive” missiles from a briefing with the Chiefs and McN on Oct. 11. State/Bohlen disagreed: Sovs were too conservative. Only McCone (the source to Keating?: on Oct. 10, said it had been confirmed to him “by official sources” that bases for six IRBM were being constructed. Who else but McCone? (or Nitze!) [Now: Claire Booth Luce? Hershberg?}

Oct. 16: JFK says missiles must be removed. But how?  
 All agree on military action. (JFK and RFK, sincerely?)  
 That evening, McNamara brings up blockade as a possible first move (rather than after airstrike, to prevent resupply: contingency plan earlier in October. (Same time as plans for invasion, ordered Oct. 1 by McN? Hershberg)

Wed Oct. 17: discussion at Ball’s office: “we did not know what authority Sov commanders in Cuba might have in the event of loss of communications with Moscow; or whether there were nuclear warheads available. [**Sunday, April 22, 12: Yet** this uncertainty didn’t seem to rule out attack of missiles or invasion, in any known discussion (though it may have in the minds of JFK...and McNamara, though he wasn’t sure of JFK, or he wouldn’t have worried that he’d never see another Saturday night. They acted as if they were certain there were no warheads there, and/or certain there was no delegation under any circumstances; or else, they were prepared to gamble!)\

Discussion of K motives. (**No mention of Mongoose!**) (**Did Nitze know: ISA?**)  
 219. Bohlen believed that K believed that the threat would force the US to agree to a settlement on Soviet terms of Berlin and the German question.

**Like nucs in Iran.**

**[Cuban missiles not only made invasion of Cuba impossible—once operational (not mentioned!) but they deterred US use of tac nucs in response to a blockade of Berlin and repulse of US ground troops: the risk of a SU FS would be**

**great (comparable to the threat of FS the US, up till now, monopolized in case of a SU invasion of Europe OR SU nucs from Cuba).**

**[Thus, if Khrushchev had announced the existence of warheads in Cuba—he could not only have kept the MRBMs there (no IRBMs yet), unless publicly traded for Turkey AND Italy (IRBM treaty in 1962!) and UK—he *would*, if he had kept them there, have been in good shape, or anyway, better shape, to press on Berlin, even occupy it!**

The NATO guarantee of FU/FS would have been too risky: it would have meant the destruction of Europe, certainly, over Berlin; though the US could launch a FS that would have protected the US (not Europe); which prospect would tempt the SU to launch a preemptive FS (though it would still be destroyed by US Polaris and theater weapons; so it didn't really have a FS capability or preemptive capability; more than without the Cuban missile, though.

(For the US to be taking the MRBMs so seriously—and especially, to claim (sincerely) that they were a problem for NATO—was to admit that the US FU guarantee to Europe was contingent on there being no real threat of SU retaliation against the US. This was true. But to admit that was to admit that the threat would be nearly obsolete when the SU **did** achieve the capability to attack the US (as K had claimed in the late '50's, but Gilpatric contradicted). Now the Cuban Crisis was likely to cause them to achieve that capability soon, just as the Gilpatric (my) speech had caused them to deploy to Cuba (an interim response).

(THE RIGHT RESPONSE in 1961 to the discovery that led me to the Gilpatric speech was to focus on how to KEEP them down to a minimal number of missiles: or none (abandoning our own missiles: at least, land-based? And minimum SLBMs, or none. Abandoning FU threats. But JFK wasn't ready to do that, in Europe (or McNamara: to Bundy). That meant abandoning our whole US/Germany/Europe economic and foreign policy: abandoning the CW in Europe (Lippman policy? Kennan?) (Could that have been done without abandoning the CW outside Europe? But what did that get us, aside (!) from domestic politics. South Korea; South Vietnam. Iran? (Elsewhere in ME?)

To keep FU in Europe—and US role, in a divided Europe—meant to build up our strategic forces (already a Doomsday Machine) at the cost of the Soviets also building a Doomsday Machine also on a hair-trigger! (As we still have today: though with no longer a basis for it in European policy, or elsewhere!)

(But these areas outside Europe didn't really matter that much (McNamara to Goodwin in 1966); and outside Indochina weren't threatened that much; and the threat in Europe wasn't that realistic—nor the US “interests” inside Europe (except to MNC's!) THAT important to justify a DM (except, one that had VERY low chance of exploding: lower than the real chance of mistakes, UA: see C-II! 1995! 1993! Berlin 1961! (Nitze)



Most, including Nitze, opposed a trade with Turkish missiles. (Thompson thought that might be K objective). Turks "would be outraged." (See K and Albanians).

JFK had in late August 1962 asked the DOD to undertake a study on what action could be taken to get the Jupiter missiles out of Turkey. (They had hardly arrived!) They had approached Turks several times to convince them that the missiles "should not be deployed, but without success." (Turks saw them as linking US to their own defense).

McN: missiles did not constitute enough of a military threat to justify military action to remove them.

Thursday, Oct. 18, at WH: McN: missiles did not change the military balance. Our overwhelming nuc superiority would deter the SU from actually using nuclear weapons...But he agreed with JFK that the political consequences, both international and domestic, of allowing them to remain dictated their removal: before they became operational and before warheads were available. ("I believe his concern was due to fear of an irrational act by the Soviets, not a calculated move on their part.")

222> No IRBMs arrived (they expected 40 launchers, 48 MRBMs and 32 IRBMs, using reloads. Only 42 MRBMs had arrived by blockade time.

Garthoff: with Cuban missiles, only 15% of our preattack force would remain. (How many Polaris at that time? At least 80?) If unimpeded the SU could deploy in Cuba a force large enough to threaten "the entire strategic balance of power." Oct. 27

SU had over 500 MR/IRBMs. (when?) Nitze saw Cuban missiles as hastening the loss of our strategic superiority "a loss we could ill afford because of our relative weakness in conventional capabilities in much of the world." 221

(FS/FU backing up our hegemony throughout the world!)

K/SU had a patient grand design for world domination. 221 (NSC-68!); eventual nuclear superiority, unipolar world, US forced to yield to Sov influence. US strat superiority[yes: but for how long?] in 1962 threatened to thwart their purposes."

Oct. 18: "McN recommended that we assume that there were no nuclear warheads in Cuba at that time." !!!

Bobby Kennedy advised caution in our reaction to the Soviet provocation to the point of, what I considered, appeasement. (!!!) He was often joined, not only by George Ball, Ros Gilpatric, and others [McN, in secret] but at times by the President." 223 [He was speaking for the President; McN was openly taking a middle position.]

Some fear that a blockade was more dangerous than an air strike (“simply against Cuba”): it might lead to sinking a Soviet ship, which could lead to Soviets using sub to sink a US ship (K threatened to William Knox on Wednesday). “Or the Kremlin could respond by taking out the missiles in Turkey and Italy, our NATO allies. This would call for us to respond with a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union.”

[Not in the eyes of Harry Rowen and me, the next week!]

This is what they were risking, with the blockade!

The central thoughts behind this, at least in my mind, were that (a) the missiles must be removed [ANY open talk at this point about a trade with Turkey? Yes, apparently: but most felt, with Nitze, that we should not agree. At this risk?] (b) we should use the minimum military force necessary to accomplish this, being prepared for subsequent escalations if the initial response did not succeed, and (c) **that we could take these steps with confidence that the situation would not get out of hand because of our unambiguous global nuclear superiority.**

[So this was a crucial judgment, to allow us to do what we did, in the face of possible counteraction elsewhere. And we **were** superior, in 1961 and 1962. Yet the situation almost did get “out of hand,” with the possibility of Soviet (tac) nuc weapons! (A possibility considered as early as Tuesday.) **(Nitze shared the view of Dillon and the JCS—as did I, and Harry Rowen!—and we all were right about Khrushchev’s view—he shared that view too! (in contrast to JFK and McNamara, who believed K would not be deterred from expanding the conflict if we attacked.**

**Yet we were dangerously wrong—including Khrushchev!—about the danger of the war exploding! JFK and McNamara were right, and for the right reasons—the possibility of unauthorized action, the uncertainties—: even more right than they knew! And they were right to be deterred even by a small possibility of explosion (as I would have been, and Khrushchev: not “the hawks” in the US and SU, who saw the risks as smaller than they were, yet were willing to accept a relatively large risk: 10% for Nitze...).**

**Yet they kept the pot boiling longer than they had to, given their bottom line, as did Khrushchev, pulling it off the fire just in time.**

...”The danger was that the Soviets might answer the initial action by an equal or greater response, including a nuclear response. [YES: to an invasion.] As I’ve said, the crucial judgment was that they would not do so because at that time we had an unarguable position of global nuclear superiority. Certainly that was my judgment and I believe that of the majority of the members of the ExComm.” 227

[K made a judgment—that we would accept tac nucs on our invasion force, since it didn’t hit the US—in the way some thought K would accept an air strike on Cuba (and Soviet forces there) because it was Cuba, not the SU.]



[That was my judgment, and Harry's. But then, most had judged that K wouldn't put missiles in Cuba at all, because they were conservative, it was too risky!

Is he going to admit what he said to hsr afterwards: he thought there was a 10% risk of all-out war?! Or, is that what he means by, "they would not do so." He says the others thought it was higher?) No, he doesn't.

Saturday afternoon, Oct. 20:

Stevenson urges offering to withdraw from Guantanamo and to trade our Jupiter missiles "before taking any provocative action, including the naval quarantine." "I was outraged at his attempt at total appeasement." "The President at first accepted [??!!] and then courteously rejected Stevenson's last-minute appeal.

Writing in 1986-87, he doesn't know or acknowledge the revelation of 1992 (?) SU-US-Cuban conference of the warheads and the delegation. (Showing that his premises about risks were mistaken, and about control.) Nor does he acknowledge Rusk's revelation in 1987 (?) that JFK had decided to be ready to make an open trade of the missiles. (I'm sure he opposed this idea on Saturday, Oct. 27).

Nor does he know of RFK's warning about shooting down another plane, or K's lack of control of Cuban AA (in context of the nuc delegation!)